

Advisory Committee for Acceptance and Diversity

Second meeting, January 30, 2014, 7 pm, T.C. Passios Building, Room 13.

In attendance:

Gregory Berthiaume	School Committee	present
Michael Mackin	School Committee	not present
Robert Ebersole	Board of Selectmen	present
Charlene Stephens	Community-at-large	present
Richard Beardmore	Community-at-large Alternate	present
Nicole Hennessy	Student Representative	present
Casey Voyer	Student Alternate	present
Elizabeth Rawlinson	Parent	present
Darruene Vann	Parent	present
Paul Bertrand	Parent Alternate	present

Also present, Loxi Calmes, Superintendent of Schools.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Charlene Stephens.

A moment of silence was held in memory of Bob Meek-LaVeck, Parent Alternate, who passed away last week.

Approval of meeting minutes

The committee voted to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2014 meeting

Fitchburg State University assistance to committee

John Chetro-Szivos, Director of the Crocker Institute at FSU talked about how they could help the committee through collaboration between departments (Communications, Political Science, Cultural Studies) by faculty, graduate students and researchers. There were five areas proposed for assistance:

1. Develop a literature review of trends in diversity initiatives on both a regional and nation perspective to learn more about best practices.
2. Develop a Diversity Scorecard that would measure the following:
 - a. Determine if the diversity initiative is accomplishing its objectives.
 - b. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative.
 - c. Identify who benefits the most and least from the initiative.
 - d. Gather data for pursuing future initiatives and possible grant opportunities.
3. Offer technical assistance to the committee in the construction of surveys aimed at measuring public opinion.
4. Conduct a series of dialogue groups with key parents in the community to understand their perspective and the scope of diversity and acceptance. These groups would include:

- i. Parents of students with disabilities
- ii. Parents of students of the gay/straight alliance
- iii. Parents of key academic groups
- iv. Parents of football payers and other athletes
- v. Parents of students who support football and athletic teams (cheerleaders, band, etc.)

A comprehensive report would be prepared for the committee on the outcome of these dialogue groups.

5. Assist the committee by gathering data for the Diversity Scorecard that may be used as a measure of community efforts.

It was noted that if the committee accepted this offer of help, John would have to present the proposal to the FSU Institutional Committee for approval, which process would take about 2-4 weeks. The work would have to be done by the end of Lunenburg's school year, as that is when this committee's work must be completed and the committee will be disbanded.

Another characteristic to be considered in the review would be socio-economic, depending on whether information may be available from the school. Also possible considerations are long-term residents versus new residents or where students live in town.

The committee discussed the proposal and unanimously supported it.

High School report

Casey Voyer reported on a recent high school group brainstorming session coordinated by Mr. Spadafino – What is the school doing well? Where can we improve? What would have to happen to make it happen? How to make it sustainable? This was an initial focus group and they want to reach out to additional students.

Some strengths are participation in town events, teachers who have interests with students outside of school, good feelings on team clubs, respectful of buildings, school spirit. Improvements include more opportunities for students to be involved, more clubs and activities, improve homeroom interaction and student teacher relationships, keep traditions going. A suggestion was a monthly newsletter by and for students including regular updates on clubs, which may encourage more to be involved. The newsletter could also include opinions and interviews as a way for students to get to know each other. Another goal is to welcome new students through a buddy system. They are also looking to find ways to engage students after the school day beyond traditional activities.

The committee asked about how homeroom time was allocated and it was noted that there may be time available for FSU activities, but that there are other existing activities already in place. Loxi was asked for data on the numbers of students involved in activities, including unduplicated counts of students who are involved in more than one activity.

Review of materials on the School's website – Culture/Climate Data

Committee members noted their appreciation all the information and documentation of what the school has done and is doing that relates to our charge. It was commented that a great deal of work was done, but it was not clear how this actually gets translated into the classroom. What does it look like? Loxi provided information about implementation and assessment.

Brainstorming activity

Charlene led the committee through a brainstorming activity. On sticky notes, each member wrote responses to the question “What steps are needed to show that the school has a diverse and accepting environment?” These were then put on the board in front of the room, and organized by the committee under headings for student activities, policies and procedures, and community activities. Charlene will type up the results and bring them back to the next meeting.

Homework for next meeting

Each member will write up a recommended statement of purpose/mission and bring it to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

February 6 and 27, 2014

March 13 and 27, 2014